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Washi, Momo: Nontraditional Pronoun Usage by a Kansai Japanese Vlogger

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Linguistics

by

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December 2018

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December 2018

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Karen Tsai

ABSTRACT

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by

Karen Tsai

Previous literature on Japanese first-person singular (1SG) pronouns deals primarily with encoding of social information such as the speaker's gender, age, and politeness or formality in Standard Japanese speakers. However, this study investigates the nontraditional 1SG pronoun usage of Momona, a 21-year-old Kansai Japanese YouTube vlogger. This study also expands the research on variation of 1SG pronoun usage in conversational speech and casual registers, which are underrepresented in the literature. I argue that Momona's usage of *washi*, *wai*, and *washa* convey her quirky personality and her identity as a young woman from the Kansai region of Japan, and that her use of *atashi*, *watashi*, and *watakushi* challenge traditional interpretations of Standard Japanese pronoun usage. I also review previous research on nontraditional use of 1SG pronouns, indexicality, and enregisterment, and provide an in-depth analysis of Momona's pronoun usage in her YouTube videos and Twitter account.

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TRANSCRIPTION AND GLOSSING SYMBOLS

-	broken-off utterance
#	uncertain hearing
< >	different language
ACC	accusative
ADJ	adjectival
COMP	complementizer
CONN	connective
CONT	continuative
COP	copula
DAT	dative
FP	final particle
GEN	genitive
HONORIFIC	honorific
HUMBLE	humble
KANSAI	Kansai Japanese
LOC	locative
NEG	negation
NMLZ	nominalizer
NOM	nominative
POL	polite
POT	potential
PROG	progressive
PST	past
Q	question marker
QUOT	quotative marker
TOP	topic marker

I. Introduction

First-person singular pronouns in Japanese are well known for being numerous and correlated with information about the speaker, addressee, and context. Martin (2004) (p.1075–1077) includes *watakushi*, *watashi*, *atakushi*, *atashi*, *watai*, *wate*, *wai*, *atai*, *ate*, *wacchi*, *asshi*, *wasshi*, *washi*, *boku*, *uchi*, and *jibun* as first-person pronouns. The most frequently used and studied 1SG pronouns include *watashi* (gender neutral), *boku* and *ore* (masculine), and *atashi* (feminine). Previous literature on Japanese first-person singular (1SG) pronouns deals primarily with encoding of social information such as the speaker's gender, age, and politeness or formality in Standard Japanese (Tokyo Japanese) speakers. This study investigates 1SG pronoun usage by Momona, a 21-year-old Kansai Japanese YouTube vlogger, examining how Momona's usage of *washi*, *wai*, and *washa* convey her quirky personality and her identity as a young woman from the Kansai region of Japan, as well as how her use of *atashi*, *watashi*, and *watakushi* challenge traditional interpretations of Standard Japanese pronoun usage. Another aim of this paper is to address the gap in the literature regarding use of *washi* by female speakers. Although some studies such as Okamoto (1995) examine non-standard linguistic practices, her study, like many others, was limited to Tokyo Japanese speakers. It is important to include speakers of non-standard regional varieties in research as well, in order to avoid marginalizing entire communities of speakers. It is also important to examine what kind of speakers are using these forms, whether it is speakers from the Osaka region, young speakers, or YouTubers, and to increase the research on variation of 1SG pronoun usage in conversational speech and casual registers.

II. Literature Review

A. Japanese 1SG Pronouns

1SG pronouns in Japanese are heavily subject to sociocultural factors, making them quite unusual cross-linguistically (Ono & Thompson 2003). Most literature on 1SG pronouns in Japanese focuses on more common pronouns such as *watakushi*, *watashi*, *atashi*, *boku*, and *ore* (Kurokawa 1972; Miyazaki 2002, 2004; Ono & Thompson 2003; Palmroos 2009), and these pronouns are generally described as falling in clear gendered categories. For example, *atashi* is generally used by female speakers, and *boku* and *ore* are generally used by male speakers. *Watashi* and *watakushi* are widely considered gender-neutral, although some sources categorize *watashi* as feminine (Abe 2004). Smith (2003) summarizes gender information about commonly-used first-person pronouns in Table 1, which also illustrates that Japanese 1SG pronouns index a wide variety of social information about the speaker besides gender such as formality, age and dialect. The pronouns in parentheses in Table 1 are less frequent forms.

	Context			
	Formal		Informal	
Men	<i>watakushi</i> (<i>jibun</i>)	<i>watashi</i> (<i>washi</i>)	<i>boku</i>	<i>ore</i>
Women	<i>watakushi</i>	<i>watashi</i>	<i>atashi</i> (<i>atakushi</i>)	(<i>atai</i>)

Table 1: Gender distinctions in first-person pronominal forms by context (Smith 2003: p.209).

Smith’s table illustrates normative usage of these pronouns with traditional gender categorizations, but real language use is not limited to these categories. Speakers exploit cultural and linguistic ideologies to construct gender identities and relations, and may utilize 1SG pronouns to style-shift to index social factors that affect speaker/addressee social deixis such as formality, politeness, and status. For example, Miyazaki (2004)

observed Japanese junior high school girls using *atashi*, *boku*, *ore*, and *uchi*, and boys using *atashi*, *boku*, *ore*, *washi*, and *ore-sama*. Miyazaki found that nontraditional 1SG pronoun usage reflected speakers' constant negotiations of identity, gender, and power within complex peer-group relations and school power dynamics. Speakers can also utilize 1SG pronouns when style-shifting to perform gender and sexuality, such as gay men using *watakushi/watashi/atashi* (Lunsing & Maree 2004) or lesbians using *jibun/boku/ore* (Abe 2004). Abe (2004) found that young lesbian employees at lesbian bars used masculine *boku/ore* and *jibun*, normally a masculine pronoun with militaristic connotations, to reject feminine *watashi/atashi*.

Other literature on nontraditional 1SG pronoun usage includes Sunaoshi (2004), who found that in the Ibaraki farmer community, *ore* was used gender-neutrally by women. According to Martin (2004), men also use *atashi* unconsciously in rapid speech, and “examples of male usage of *atakushi* are easy to find” (p.1076). Clearly, 1SG pronoun usage in Japanese is much richer and more complex than Table 1 suggests. Notably, the current literature includes attested usage by women of all masculine 1SG pronouns from Table 1 except for *washi*.

1. Washi

This thesis focuses in part on the use of *washi* by Momona, a 21-year-old female university student and YouTube vlogger. According to Martin (2004), *washi* is “a popular self-designation for rustic old men and for sumo wrestlers or baseball players of any age” (p.1076). *Washi* has also been described as typical of elderly men, and in literature it is used by aged, learned characters such as Dumbledore from the Harry Potter books, or Gandalf from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (Nishimura 2016). In short, all the literature suggests that *washi* primarily indexes age, as well as gender. Some native Japanese speakers have also reported to me that *watashi* may be reduced to *washi* in rapid, casual speech, although when asked what they hear in such cases, they

consistently report perceiving *washi* as a distinct pronoun, not *watashi* spoken quickly. To the best of my knowledge, there are currently no studies on female speakers using *washi*.

2. Role Language (*Yakuwarigo*)

Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011) discuss the origins of the stereotype of elderly men's use of *washi* through "role language," a linguistic stereotype based on social and cultural stereotypes which can be traced back to actual spoken language. "Role language" is a term coined by Kinsui (2003) who defined it as follows:

a set of spoken language features (such as vocabulary, grammar and phonetic characteristics) that can be psychologically associated with a particular character type. (Character's attributes include age, gender, occupation, social status, appearance and personality.)

(Kinsui (2003: p.205); cited by Kinsui & Yamakido (2015: p.30))

Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011) also explain that role language is also similar to sociolects:

both are language varieties extracted from groups of speakers differing in extralinguistic variables or attributes, such as gender, age, social status, occupation and so forth... [Role language] originate[s] specifically from interest in language usage in fiction, which is sometimes quite different from actual speech uttered by real people.

(Teshigawara & Kinsui 2011: p.41)

The key difference between role language and sociolects lies in the research methods used to study them. Sociolects consider actual speech data, whereas role language primarily uses fiction or other media. Data sources for role language include print fiction, Japanese subtitles, dubbing of interviews with non-Japanese-speaking foreigners, and verbal play observed in amateur weblogs. Role language can also examine extralinguistic variables

such as appearance (e.g. good-looking vs. physically unattractive characters), personality, and humanity (e.g. human vs. nonhuman, aliens/animals/imaginary beings). Role language may be considered similar to speech style, since people can switch character types by adopting different sets of 1SG pronouns and character-associated endings such as copulas and final particles.

3. Elderly Male Language

One example of a role language is what Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011) call “Elderly Male Language.” According to Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011), elderly male characters in Japanese manga almost always speak using a set of characteristic lexical items: “the verb of existence *oru* (instead of *iru*); copula *ja*; negative *n*; and the first-person pronoun *washi*” (p.44). Table 2 from Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011) compares elderly male language with Kansai/Western Japanese, and Standard/Eastern Japanese.

	Elderly Male Language	Western Japanese	Standard Japanese/ Eastern Japanese
Affirmation	<i>kyō wa ame ja</i> * It is rainy today.	<i>kyō wa ame ja/ya</i> It is rainy today.	<i>kyō wa ame da</i> It is rainy today.
Negation	<i>shiran/shiranu</i> † I do not know.	<i>shiran/shirahen</i> I do not know.	<i>shiranai</i> ‡ I do not know.
Existence of animate beings	<i>oru</i> be	<i>oru</i> be	<i>iru</i> be
Progressive/Stative	<i>shitteoru/shittoru</i> I know.	<i>shitteoru/shittoru</i> I know.	<i>shitteiru/shitteru</i> I know.

Table 2: Comparison of Elderly Male Language, Western Japanese and Standard Japanese/Eastern Japanese (Teshigawara & Kinsui 2011: p.45)

Table 2 clearly shows that elderly male language and Kansai Japanese overlap quite a bit, and the characteristics of the former are primarily regional, not age-related. According to Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011), Kinsui (2008) investigated the origins of elderly male language and found that it can be traced back to the late 18th century in Edo (Tokyo). The “younger generation was more likely to speak the eastern dialect of [Tokyo],” and

the older educated generation tended to speak the more conservative, normative western dialect of Kyoto. Older learned males such as scholars and medical doctors, would often use the more traditional dialect of the imperial capital and appear old-fashioned to younger speakers of the emerging and changing Edo dialect.

(Kinsui (2003: p.218-228); cited by Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011: p.45))

This developed into a stereotype emphasized in popular plays and novels of the time, which resulted in the “transformation of western dialectal characteristics into a fictional attribute of elderly male language” (Teshigawara & Kinsui 2011: p.46). However, this stereotype of *washi* indexing age and gender is not sufficient for explaining the use of *washi* in the data for this study by Momona, a young Japanese female speaker.

B. Enregisterment and Indexicality

There is a wide body of literature on indexicality (Ochs 1992; Silverstein 1976, 1985) and enregisterment (Agha 2003, 2005, 2011) which I will not exhaustively review here, but the theoretical concepts of indexicality and enregisterment are useful for this study. Indexicality “involves the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings” (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). For instance, the association between elderly male language (specifically age and gender indexicality) and *washi* are culturally mediated, rather than intrinsic to the language. According to Silverstein (1976), there are two types of indexicals: referential indexes (e.g. pronouns, demonstratives, tense markers) and non-referential indexes (e.g. prosodic features, honorific morphemes and words). Referential indexes depend on context for interpretation, whereas non-referential indexes do not have a referent in the speech context and point to non-referential aspects of the context such as gender, region, and stance. In Ochs’ framework, Japanese sentence final particle *-wa* is not a feminine particle, but rather it indirectly indexes femininity by directly indexing a gentle stance (Ochs 1992).

Enregisterment, per Agha (2005), refers to “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms” (p.231). Rodriguez (2018) provides an in-depth discussion of enregisterment of dialects in Japanese in YouTube comments. Some of the qualities in Figure 1 such as ‘youthful’ and ‘cute’ are based on qualities found in Rodriguez’s thesis.

C. Indexical Field

Eckert (2008) argued that “meanings of variables are not precise or fixed but rather constitute a field of potential meanings –an indexical field, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable” (p.453). Indexical fields take into account the wide variety of meanings for linguistic variables, which the data in this study will illustrate for *washi*. Although the current literature shows age (elderly), gender (male), and region (Kansai) indexicality, the current data will show that the indexical field for *washi* is not limited to the elderly male language stereotype. Other qualities such as casualness, friendliness, and cuteness are also indexed with use of *washi*. Figure 1 illustrates my conceptualization of the indexical field of *washi*. It is modelled after the indexical field of /t/ in Eckert (2008: p.469), with social types in boxes. I have not distinguished between permanent qualities and stances for this diagram.

Notably, the theoretical concept of indexical fields allows *washi* to index more than just the elderly man stereotype. In fact, there are many dichotomies included here: old/youthful; masculine/feminine; assertive/gentle. The indexical field also includes many qualities associated with use of dialectal varieties in Japan such as rural/idyllic qualities of the “country”. Jinnouchi (2007) also describes a “dialect boom” phenomenon where it has become “fashionable” for young people in metropolitan areas to use dialects (p.44). Rodriguez (2018) also mentions a phenomenon called *hōgen kanojo* ‘dialect girl’ discussed in YouTube videos and comments. According to Rodriguez, dialect is evaluated

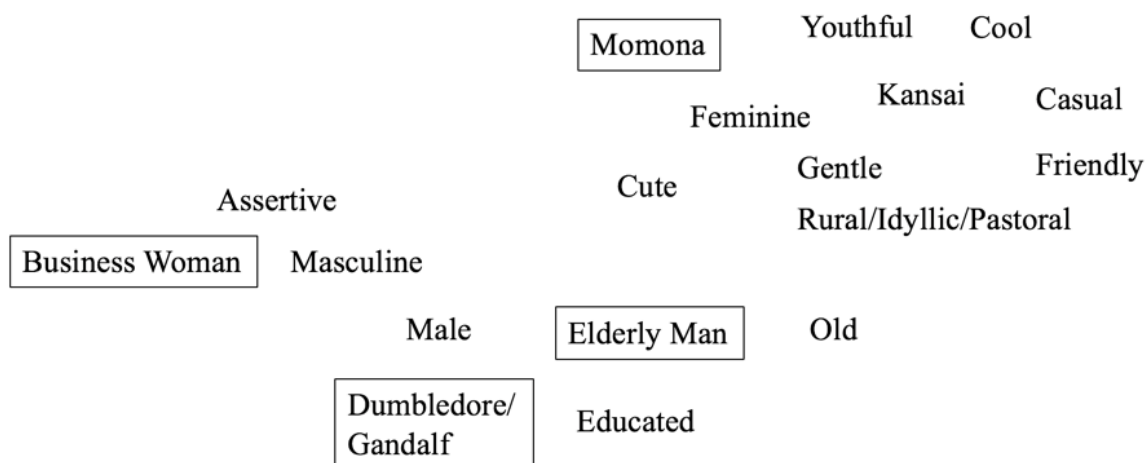


Figure 1: Indexical Field of *washi*. Boxes = social types, black = qualities

as cute if the speaker is also cute and attractive; a young woman is the archetypical form of this (as in the example of *hōgen kanojo*, but “it can also apply to attractive young men or ‘cute’ elderly people” (Rodriguez 2018: p.28).

III. Data

The data for this study come from YouTube videos created by 21-year-old vlogger Momona. Momona’s 1SG pronoun use is particularly interesting because it features frequent and nontraditional use of *washi*, as well as an unusual pronoun *washa* and dialectal *wai*. Research on dialectal 1SG pronoun usage is lacking in the literature, which makes this case study particularly important for highlighting nontraditional speaker variation in Japanese 1SG pronoun usage.

Momona is a speaker of Osaka dialect, which I will refer to as Kansai Japanese. Kansai Japanese, also known as Kinki Japanese, is the most widely-spoken non-standard variety of Japanese (Scott 2018). According to Shingu (2018), Kansai Japanese is a “‘powerful’ dialect historically and culturally, spoken by dozens of millions of people who live or used to live in the Kansai area, including major cities such as Osaka and Kyoto.” Osaka is also strongly associated with *manzai*, Japanese stand-up comedy, and comedians often use Kansai Japanese for comedic effect. Kansai Japanese symbolizes the strong local identity of speakers who are proud to be of the Kansai people and local culture. Momona proudly self-identifies as being from Kansai in several videos, such as calling herself *Kansai jin* ‘Kansai person’ in the video *Don Kihōte de sugoi mon koutekita yo. Sugoi mon tte nani* ‘Bought something amazing from Don Quixote. What is it.’

Momona originally created her YouTube channel to document her study abroad in Korea. In her very first video, she explains that she is in her third year of college, and has already spent two years studying in Korea. She decided to start a YouTube vlog to make more friends and get out more. In a later self-introduction video, Momona confirms that she is Japanese, since her channel name *Momona kankoku ryuugakusei*, ‘Momona the Korea study abroad student’ sounds like she is a Korean study abroad student, rather than a Japanese student studying abroad in Korea. Her study abroad experience features prominently in many videos, most of which involve going out and eating Korean food, purchasing Korean snacks or products to show her viewers, or comparing differences

between Korean and Japanese cultures. This is also prominent in her opening catchphrase for every video:

Japanese	English
<i>See no,</i>	‘Ready go’
<i>Anyohaseyou,</i>	<Korean> ‘Hello,’
<i>Momona innida.</i>	‘I am Momona.’ /<Korean>
<i>Konnichiwa,</i>	<Japanese> ‘Hello,’
<i>Momona desu.</i>	‘I am Momona.’ /<Japanese>

Table 3: Momona’s Opening Catchphrase

In the self-introduction video, Momona also tells viewers that her first name is Momona, her birthday is September 19, 1996, and her hobbies are eating, sleeping, travelling, and meeting new people. In later videos, Momona confirms that she is from the Kansai region, and the videos that I have seen suggest that she is from Osaka, based on a video taken in Namba, Osaka in which she says she has come home from Korea, as well as other videos in which she calls herself a *Kansai jin* or ‘Kansai person.’ Momona’s speech registers throughout the videos range from polite Standard Japanese and polite Kansai Japanese forms to casual Kansai Japanese. She speaks Kansai Japanese in all her videos.

Momona posted her first video to YouTube in March 2017 and created her secondary channel *Momona no sabu-chan* ‘Momona’s sub-chan (channel)’ in August 2017 for unedited videos. The name of her sub-channel is also a pun in Japanese, since *-chan* is a diminutive suffix attached after names, often used affectionately in nicknames or with small children. In her first sub-channel video, Momona explains that she has created a secondary channel to upload unedited videos since editing is *mendokusai* ‘annoying.’ Unlike her main channel, Momona doesn’t use an opening phrase for the sub-channel, since that is also “*mendokusai*.” In one year, Momona quickly gained a huge number of followers. Table 4 compares her two channels at the time of data collection for this study.

The content of Momona’s videos generally tend to be about food, makeup, or hair. The videos take place in a variety of locations, including Momona’s room, Korean restau-

Main Channel	Sub-Channel
momona 韓国留学生 <i>momona kankoku ryuugakusei</i> ‘Momona Korea study abroad student’	momona のサブちゃん <i>momona no sabu-chan</i> ‘Momona’s sub-channel (-chan = DIM)’
Created March 2017	Created August 2017
385,000+ subscribers	140,000+ subscribers
61.7+ million views	4.2+ million views
102 videos	12 videos
Average length: 6 minutes	Average length: 4 minutes

Table 4: Comparison of Momona’s YouTube Channels

rants and cafes, Japanese hair salons, theme parks, and so on. The vast majority of the videos simply consist of Momona speaking directly to the viewers or narrating her activities or narrating over her original speech through voice over, but some include other people, ranging from a friend helping with the camera out of view, to hair stylists doing her hair, a gym trainer giving her an exercise session (one video), or Momona interacting with other female friends her age.

The YouTube data consists of 33 videos that contained at least one 1SG pronoun usage. 26 of these are videos from Momona’s main YouTube channel; 7 are from her sub-channel. Overall, the videos average 5.6 minutes each. Altogether, the videos total just over 3 hours. The data include 165 tokens of 1SG pronouns. The examples of data in this paper are given based on intonation units, with each line representing a new intonation unit, and were transcribed using transcription conventions outlined in Du Bois (2006). An intonation unit is defined as “a stretch of speech uttered under a single coherent intonation contour” (Du Bois et al. 1993:p.47). To give context to each pronoun usage, the utterances before, including, and after the target pronouns were transcribed, totaling 738 intonation units. Momona also uses on-screen text and images during her videos, a detail that proves useful in the analyses to follow. She is also active on the social media platforms Instagram and Twitter, the latter of which is also included as data in this study.

Data were also taken from Momona’s Twitter account. Momona joined Twitter in August 2014. Her Twitter username is momona🍑, and her Twitter handle is @momona_919. At the time of data collection, Momona had 69 tweets with 1SG pronouns, ranging from January 2015 to March 2018. Data from both her tweets and her replies were included.

IV. Methodology

For this study, the data were examined for 1SG pronoun usage. First, the YouTube videos were viewed, and the time stamp of each token and the pronoun choice were noted. Videos were watched independently by 5 native Japanese speakers to ensure all pronouns were accurately recorded. Any discrepancies were resolved by checking in person with at least 3 people or by deferring to the majority. Video selection was not statistically random, but was intended to be inclusive of many different social contexts. Some were selected for being recent or older, for having more views, for including male or female speakers other than Momona, or for their format (e.g. one is a live-stream, as opposed to a pre-recorded video). Videos from both the main channel and the sub-channel were selected to include edited and unedited videos. Most were selected using YouTube’s ‘play next’ function, which automatically chooses the next video based on factors such as the viewer’s past videos watched and which videos other viewers watched next. The 33 videos selected for the database span about 10 months, from March 21, 2017 to January 25, 2018.

Many of Momona’s videos have no 1SG pronoun usage, which is not unusual for Japanese since the pronoun is often optional. According to Ono & Thompson (2003), 1SG is highly infrequent in Japanese conversation; in their database of 21 spontaneous informal conversations, they found “fewer than one instance per page of transcript, or approximately one in every 22 clauses (or one in every 56 intonation units)” (p.325). Videos with no 1SG pronoun usage were not included in this study, and the number of videos without 1SG pronoun usage was not recorded during data collection. Pronoun usages that involved voicing (‘voice of another’; Du Bois (2006)) or quotative uses were also excluded. This was not frequent, but sometimes occurred, for example when Momona quoted an imaginary boyfriend.

15 of the 33 videos were chosen for transcription. First, the videos with 5 or more *washi* tokens were transcribed. These 6 videos happened to include all videos that had

washa and *watakushi*. Finally, the video with the highest number of *atashi* tokens was transcribed, which also happened to be the video with the most *wai* tokens. Then, a video with *wai* usage with a peer, a video with a male guest, and additional videos with *wai* and *atashi* tokens were included for transcription. Regarding statistical distribution, Momona’s overall 1SG pronoun usage matches with that of the sample of videos selected for transcription (see Figure 2), although my preference for examining non-traditional pronouns means the distribution of the latter is slightly skewed in favor of *washa* and *watakushi*, and against *watashi*.

For the transcription process, a native Standard Japanese speaker first transcribed sections of each video that contained the target 1SG pronoun, plus the preceding and following utterances, into Japanese. A native Kansai Japanese speaker then checked the initial transcription and Romanized the data using Modified Hepburn Romanization (Kudo 2011). Finally, I checked the transcription, Romanization and intonation units, and glossed and translated the data. Although I am not a native speaker, I have studied Japanese and Kansai Japanese intensively for five years as both a language learner (Oral Proficiency Interview rating: Advanced) and a linguist trained in discourse transcription. I have also lived in the Kansai region for four summers, participating in three intensive study abroad programs (including the Critical Language Scholarship Program) and conducting fieldwork in Kansai and Okinawa. After I checked that transcriptions, the data were then coded for analysis for pronoun, postpositional particles, dialectal features, and politeness features.

Data from Momona’s Twitter account were also collected for this study. A native Japanese speaker read through all of Momona’s tweets and replies on her account and recorded all 1SG pronouns used. Screenshots were taken to record the date and content of each occurrence, as well as any images. Most pronouns used were written with the Japanese syllabary, hiragana. If the kanji 私 was used, the pronoun was interpreted as being *watashi*. Tweets and replies were included in data collections.

V. Results

At first glance, the results are quite surprising in their deviation from traditional 1SG usage as documented in the literature. Figure 2 shows the distribution of Momona’s 1SG pronoun usage in the overall data and the transcribed videos. Momona overwhelmingly uses *washi* as her main 1SG pronoun. In both the overall data and the transcribed portion of the data, *washi* accounts for about 40% of the occurrences. *Watashi* and *atashi* are relatively frequent at about 28% and 20% respectively. *Washa* and *wai* were relatively infrequent at 6% and 5%. *Watakushi* was the rarest at <1%, occurring only once in the data.

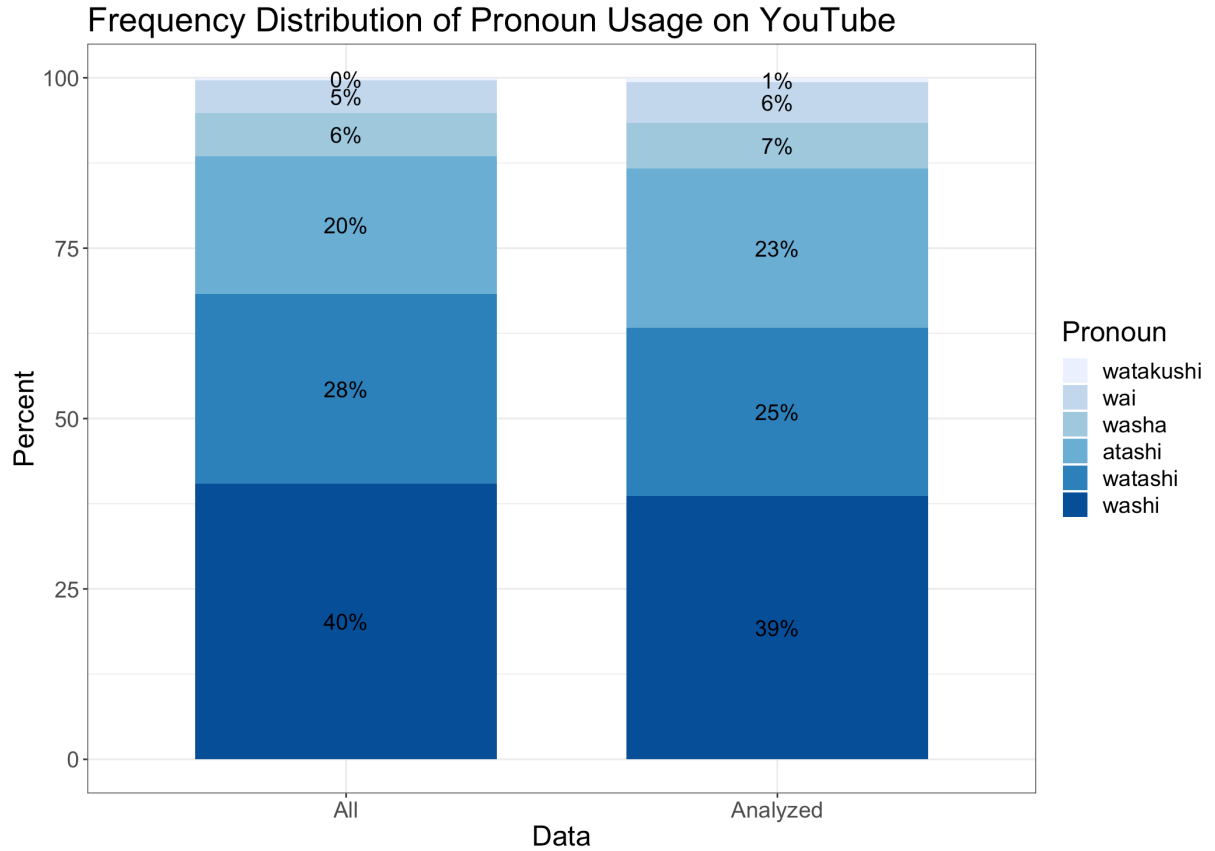


Figure 2: Frequency Distribution of Momona’s 1SG Pronoun Usage on YouTube

To address the possibility that Momona’s 1SG pronoun choice is a stylistic choice, I also analyzed the frequency distribution of each pronoun across time. The videos

analyzed for this study ranged from March 2017 to January 2018, which covered the entire time range of Momona’s videos at the time of data collection. Figure 3 shows how Momona starts out primarily using *atashi*, and her use of *washi* dramatically increases starting around August 2017, where there is a very marked shift from *atashi* to *washi*. Her use of *washa* is also concentrated in later videos. It is very likely that Momona’s popularity, the casual, friendly tone of her videos, and her rapport with her subscribers contributes to the increased use of *washi*.

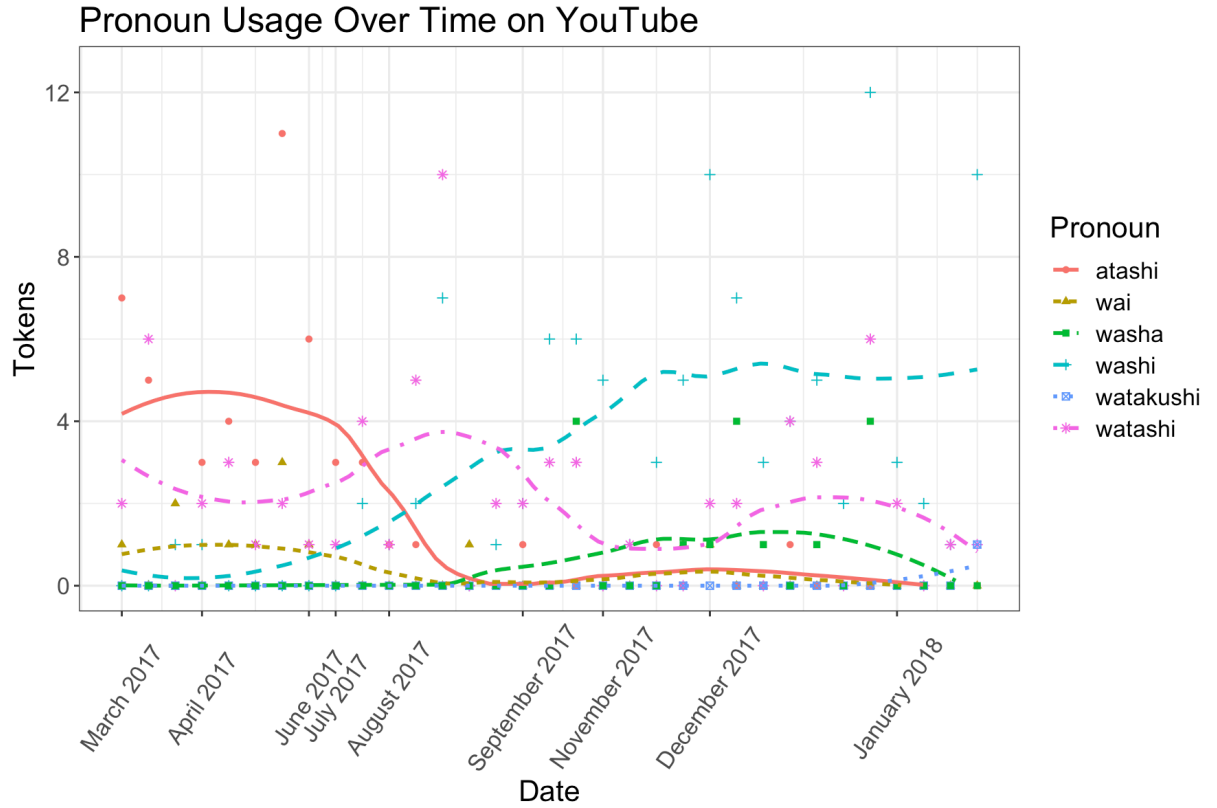


Figure 3: 1SG Pronoun Frequency Distribution Over Time on YouTube

Momona’s Twitter account was created in 2014, which makes it 3 years older than her YouTube account. I also analyzed the frequency distribution of pronouns across time for her Twitter account, as seen in Figure 4. Here too, *atashi* makes a switch with *washi* around October 2017 and makes a sharp increase in frequency. Even more striking is the relative frequency of *wai* throughout most of her Twitter history.

The data were also analyzed for co-occurrence with marked dialectal features, which

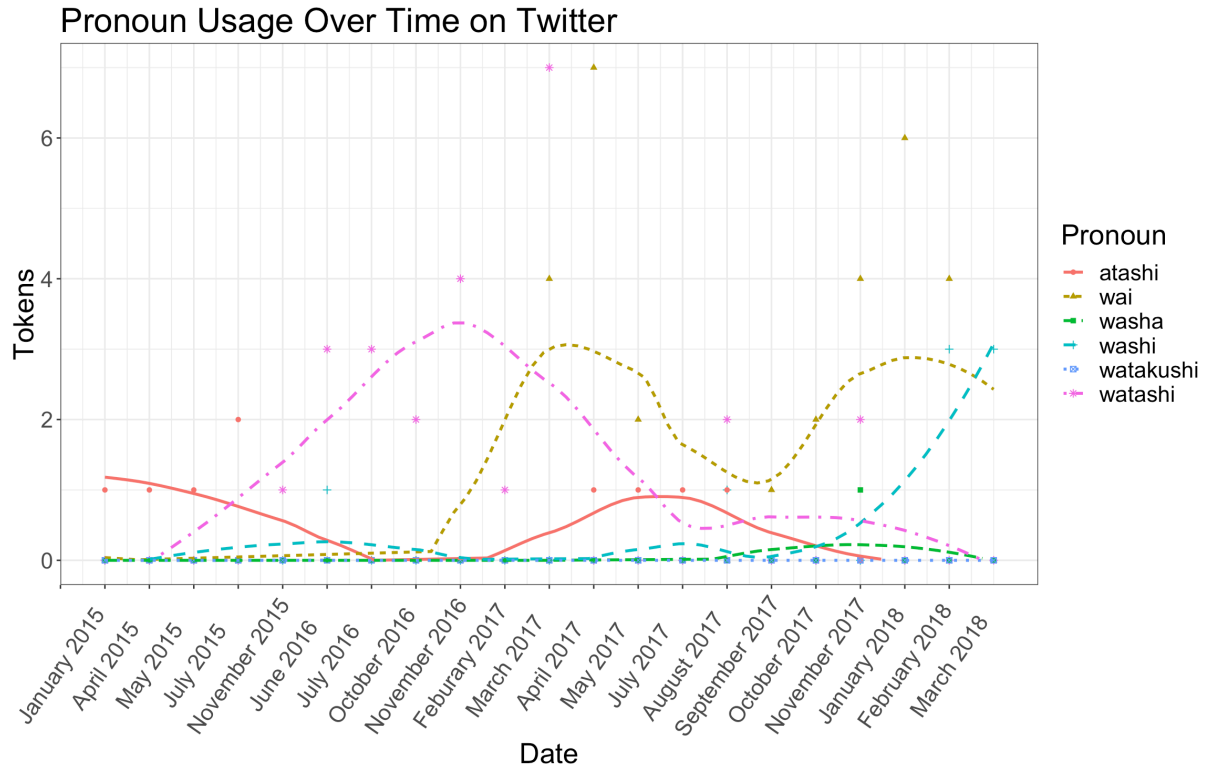


Figure 4: 1SG Pronoun Frequency Distribution Over Time on Twitter

included, but were not limited to, the Kansai Japanese features listed in Table 2. Although not every utterance could be classified as “dialectal,” this does not necessarily mean that Momona was frequently switching between two dialects, as it is generally known that younger Japanese speakers have adopted more Standard Japanese into their speech from influences in television, education, travel, and other media (Palter & Horiuchi 1995). Co-occurrence was analyzed as 1SG pronoun and dialectal features occurring together within two intonation units. Besides the features in Table 2, dialectal features included lexical items unique to Kansai Japanese such *honma* ‘really’ (vs. Standard Japanese *hontō*), or final particles such as *na* (SJ: *ne*) or *de* (SJ: *yo*). Figure 5 shows the results for each 1SG pronoun. *Washi* and *atashi* occur mostly with dialectal features, whereas *watashi* and *washa* tend not to occur with dialectal features. *Wai* only occurs with dialectal features, and *watakushi* does not (although it is important note that there was only one token of *watakushi*).

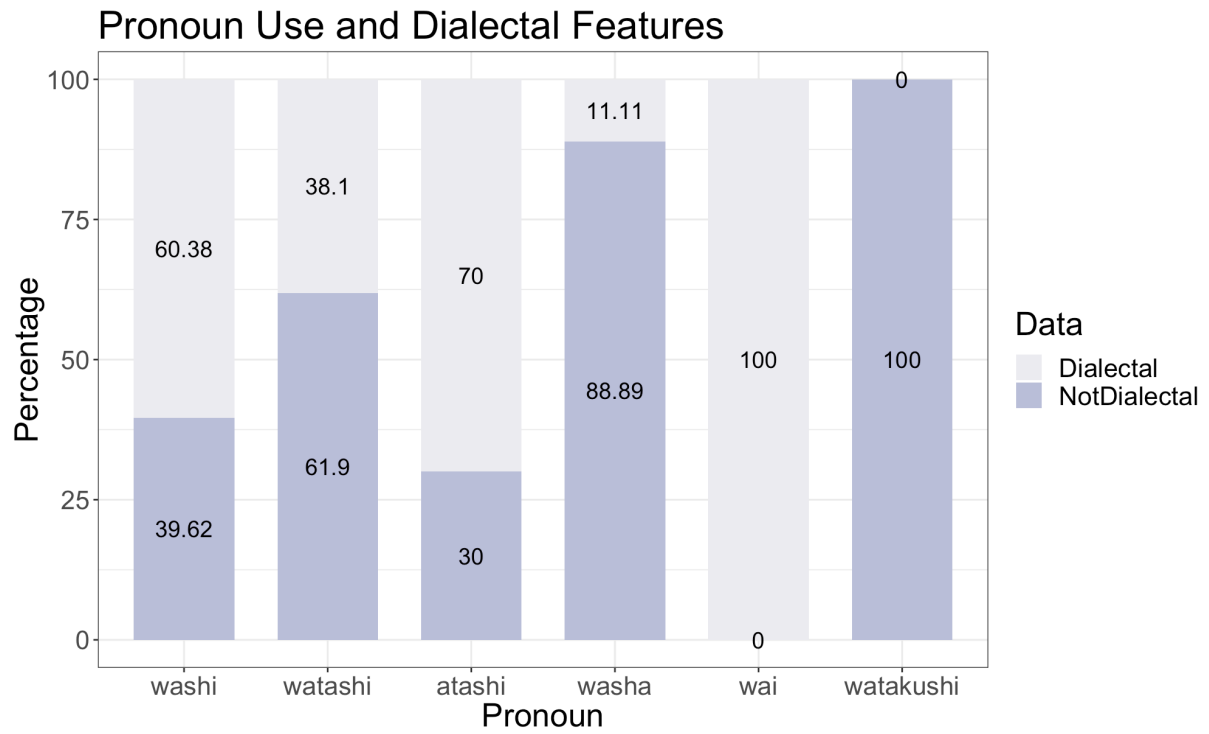


Figure 5: Pronoun Use and Dialectal Features

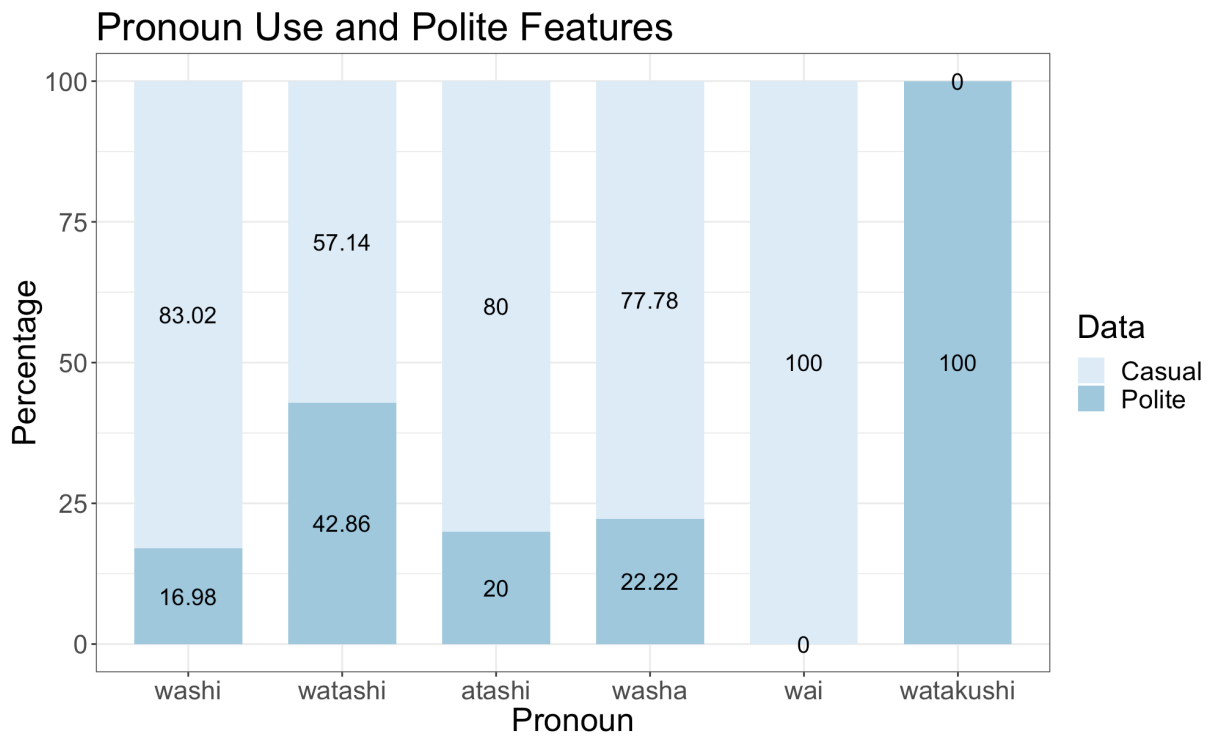


Figure 6: Pronoun Use and Polite Features

To examine if politeness was an important factor in Momona’s 1SG choices, each 1SG pronoun and its occurrence with polite features was also analyzed. Co-occurrence was analyzed as occurring in or within two intonation units of a verb in polite form (e.g. *-masu*) or with the polite copula (*desu*). Polite copula *desu* and polite verb form *masu* were counted as polite features; zero copula, casual copula *ya* or *da*, and dictionary form verbs were considered casual. Figure 6 shows the distribution of polite vs. casual features for each pronoun. Figure 7 shows the distribution of 1SG pronouns in all polite utterances that included a 1SG pronoun.

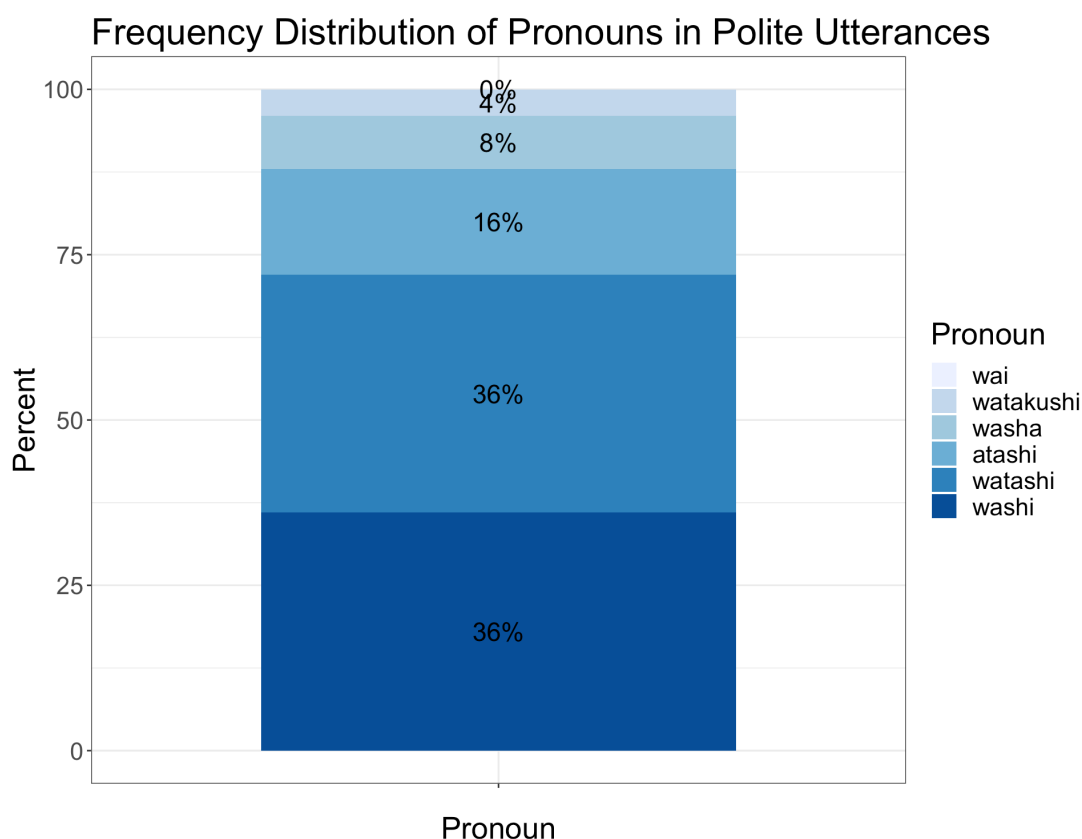


Figure 7: Frequency Distribution of Pronouns in Polite Utterances

Momona usually speaks casually, which explains the general bias against polite features in her speech. However, Figure 6 shows that *watashi* is used relatively more often in polite utterances than *washi*, *atashi*, *washa*, and *wai*. *Watakushi* was used only in polite utterances, although there was only one token. On the other hand, *wai* was used only in

casual utterances, which indicates that there may be a difference in register use for *wai* and *watakushi* that requires more data to investigate. *Washi*, *watashi*, *atashi*, and *washa* were used in both casual and polite utterances, so the use of these likely involves other factors besides politeness. The following sections discuss these and the results of each pronoun in more detail.

A. *Washi*

Except for Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011), the literature treats *washi* as a pronoun indexical of old age and male gender, rather than a regional indexicality for Kansai Japanese. Momona’s use of *washi* is consistent with Kansai Japanese dialectal features and seems to index region, and inconsistent with elderly male language features. Table 5 provides examples from the data illustrating the four linguistic features of Kansai Japanese listed earlier in Table 2. Momona’s speech clearly shows use of *washi* with Kansai features in examples 1-3 of Table 5. None of the features exclusive to elderly male language such as *nu* (negation) are ever found in the transcribed data, but the features exclusive to Kansai Japanese (*ya*, affirmation; *hen*, negation) are frequent throughout.

Momona also uses *washi* in her Twitter posts, as is evident in Figure 8, a tweet about Coca-Cola brand makeup. The tweet reads: *Kore wa washi ga kawana-akan yatsu ya ga na*. ‘This is something I must buy.’ This example is further support that *washi* is not simply a reduction of *watashi* in speech, but a distinct pronoun. It is also consistent with the trend of occurring with other strong dialectal features.

Washi is also sometimes used in text that appears in the videos while Momona talks. For example, in Figure 9 from *Momona, ViVi moderu ni narimasu* ‘Momona, becomes a ViVi model’, the text *Chigau washi wo misetai*. ‘I want to show a different me.’ appears on the screen and matches her speech. Figures 101 and 102 from *[tsui ni] hatsu korabo douga desu* ‘[Finally] The first collaboration video’ show Momona pointing to the peach on the peach-flavored Coca-Cola (a pun on her name Momona, since *momo* is ‘peach’ in

Kansai Japanese Features of Momona’s Speech		
1. Affirmation:	<i>ya</i>	<i>Washi</i> <i>ga miteru tte kanji yaro</i> 1SG NOM watch-PROG QUOT feeling right.KANSAI ‘like, I’m the one watching right?’
2. Negation:	<i>-n</i>	<i>Washi</i> <i>mo zenzen <u>shirankute</u></i> . 1SG also not.at.all know-NEG.KANSAI-CONT ‘I also don’t know at all.’
3. Existence of animate beings:	<i>-oru</i>	<i>ima <i>washi</i> mitorun desu keredomo</i> now 1SG look.PROG.KANSAI-because COP however ‘I’m looking now however’ ((explains shopping app))
4. Progressive/ Stative:	<i>-ttoru</i>	<i>Suggoi <i>haittoru</i> mon</i> very enter-PROG.KANSAI FP ‘There’s so much’

Table 5: Examples of Kansai Japanese Features in Momona’s Speech

Japanese) and then to herself. Together with the text, she says *momo, washi. momo, washi.*

Not only does Momona use *washi* in casual, dialectal speech, she also uses it with more polite speech. Table 6 shows an example taken from Momona, *Momona, ViVi moderu ni narimasu* ‘Momona becomes a ViVi model,’ where *washi* occurs with polite copula *desu*. 1SG pronoun usages are bolded, regional Kansai Japanese are bold and underlined, and polite features (copula *desu* and polite verb ending *masu*) are underlined. The following Table 7 is another example of *washi* with polite copula *desu* from the video *Kankoku de atta kowai hanashi* ‘Scary story that was in Korea.’

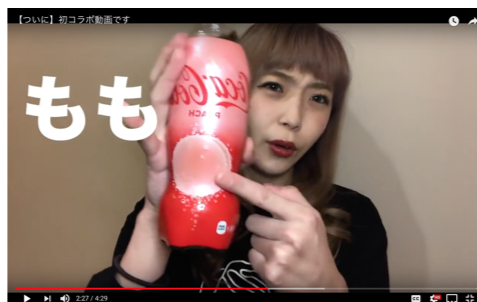
Besides using *washi* the most often, she also uses it in all types of videos and interactions, including during a live stream and with other male and female speakers who appear in her videos (they used *watashi* and *wai*, respectively). The data suggest that *washi* is Momona’s unmarked pronoun, which may be used in polite and casual utterances, with or without dialectal features. *Washi* is clearly not indexing the elderly male stereotype, but is rather part of Momona’s enactment of her Kansai identity and casual friendliness,



Figure 8: *Kore wa washi ga kawana-akan yatsu ya ga na.*
‘This is something I must buy.’



Figure 9: *Chigau washi wo misetai.*
‘I want to show a different me.’



1) Momo ‘peach’



2) Washi ‘I’ (Momona)

Figure 10: Example from [tsui ni] hatsu korabo douga desu
‘[Finally] The first collaboration video’

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Mazu BiViVi tte nani tte yanna.</i>	First Be ViVi-QUOT what QUOT need.to.do.CASUAL.	‘First I need to explain what Be ViVi is.’
(H) <i>Washi mo BiViVi tte nannan? tte omoinagara,</i>	1SG also Be ViVi QUOT what-what QUOT think.PROG	‘I was also wondering what Be ViVi was’
(H) <i>BiViVii tte yu-tte</i>	Be ViVi-QUOT say.KANSAI-CONN	‘I said Be ViVii’
<i>BiViVii tte yu-tte ne</i>	Be ViVi QUOT say.KANSAI-CONN FP	‘I said BeViVii, y’know’
<i>Nanka ne</i>	like FP	‘like’
<i>yu-tto-tta-n desu keredomo</i>	say.KANSAI-CONT.KANSAI-PST-because COP however	‘I was saying it however’
<i>nani ka tte iimasu to</i>	what Q QUOT say.NPST COND	‘I will explain what it is’
<i>koko ni kaitoru ne</i>	here LOC write.IS.KANSAI FP	‘It’s written here’ (showing shopping app on her phone)
(H) <i>koko ima ne</i>	here now FP	‘here now’
<i>ima washi mitoru-n desu keredomo</i>	now look.PROG.KANSAI-because COP however 1SG	‘I’m looking now however’ (continues to explain the shopping app)

Table 6: *Washi* co-occurring with polite speech features in *Momona, ViVi moderu ni narimasu*
‘Momona becomes a ViVi model’

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Washi ne</i>	1SG FP	‘I’
<i>...ano</i>	um	‘um’
(2.1)		
<i>shuumatsu ni chotto youji ga atte,</i>	weekend DAT some errands NOM is.CONN	‘weekend DAT some errands NOM is.CONN’
<i>Tōkyō ni ittetan desu yo.</i>	Tokyo DAT go.CONT.PST COP FP	‘went to Tokyo.’

Table 7: *Washi* co-occurring with polite speech features in *Kankoku de atta kowai hanashi*
‘Scary story that was in Korea.’

which is also communicated through her dialectal speech and the content of her YouTube videos.

For most Japanese speakers, the stereotypical elderly male use of *washi* is likely perpetuated by modern media, and is thus more salient than actual dialectal use of *washi* or use by young Japanese speakers. In Momona’s case, however, the data clearly shows that *washi* is indexing region and perhaps friendliness, but it is not indexing age, gender, nor demonstrating use of elderly male language. This case study of Momona also illustrates the methodological implications of such research, and the importance of distinguishing between role language and sociolect when conducting linguistic analysis. According to Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011), traditional Japanese linguistics has relied on fictional data such as novels, “often uncritically, regardless of whether the data reflected real language in use or simply the expressive intent of the writer” (p.43). In this data, the distinction between role language and sociolect is key to interpreting Momona’s use of *washi*.

B. *Washa*

The data suggests that *washa* is a distinct pronoun originating from *washi* (1SG) + *wa* (TOPIC). According to Martin (2004), “in rapid speech *washa* = *watasha* = *watashi wa* is sometimes heard” (p.1076). Smith (2003) attributes *washa* to *washi wa*, and provides an example from Shimizu Ikko’s novel *Onna Juyaku* ‘Woman director’ (1988), a ‘business novel’ (“a popular form of fiction with a primarily male readership” (p.216)). In this novel, the female protagonist Akashi Ichiko, a managing director of a department store’s publicity department, uses *washa*, which the narrator perceives as indexing masculinity, “mixed/jumbled with male speech forms (that is, bad),” and a “*ranbou*” ‘rough’ speech style (p.218). These descriptions seem to suggest that *washa* is simply a reduced form of *washi wa* or *watashi wa* in rapid speech, as well as one associated with *washi* as an exclusively masculine 1SG pronoun. However, I propose that Momona’s use of *washa* in

her videos does not index masculinity, but is rather a neutral, grammaticalized pronoun with origins in *washi wa*. The motivating evidence for this claim is one occurrence of *washa wa* in the data, as seen in Table 8.

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Iya,</i>	no	‘no’
<i>Washa wa,</i>	1SG TOP	‘I’
<i>Yappa sa,</i>	as.expected FP	‘yeah’
<i>Ano kawaii kei ga anma</i> <i>nia-wan wake ##-</i>	that cute type NOM not.really suit.NEG.KANSAI reason	‘cause cute style doesn’t re- ally suit me ##-’

Table 8: Example of *washa wa* from *Momona, ViVi moderu ni narimasu*
‘Momona becomes a ViVi model’

This example of *washa* clearly cannot be accounted for with the *washa+wa* explanation offered in the literature. To further support this hypothesis, I draw on additional data from Momona’s Twitter account that shows use of *washa* (わしや) in a Twitter post. The post relates to a video Momona posts the next day about dyeing her hair pink. The tweet includes an image of the red and pink hair dyes she mixed together. Momona used *washi* 9 times and *washa* 2 times throughout that video, although that particular video was not included in this study. The tweet in Figure 11 says *Washa doko ni muka-ttoru-n yaro ka. Mata erai koto shite-shimouta*. ‘Where am I headed. I’ve done something terrible again.’

It remains to be seen how widespread the use of *washa* is, both online and in speech. The example of *washa wa* supports the argument against *washa* as simply a phonological reduction of *washa wa*. Although I am not a native speaker, my friends (young Japanese women in their 20’s) who use *washi* in their own daily speech judge *washa wa* as sounding acceptable and grammatically sound. Further evidence is needed to determine whether *washa* has indeed grammaticalized into its own pronoun distinct from *washi wa*.



Figure 11: *Washa doko ni muka-ttoru-n yaro ka. Mata erai koto shite-shimouta.*
'Where am I headed. I've done something terrible again.'

C. *Wai*

Martin (2004) lists the 1SG pronoun *wai* as dialectal, belonging to Osaka Japanese. *Wai* is also reported to be a pronoun derived from *washi*, mainly used by men in the Kansai region in Kankokai (2000), although Tokugawa (1989) lists other dialects located outside of the Kansai region, including dialects in the Shikoku, Tohoku, and Kanto regions.¹ *Wai* is overlooked in the literature, which may be due to a combination of its infrequency and its status as a dialectal pronoun; I am not aware of any study that examines *wai*. Momona’s usage of *wai* is certainly infrequent (5%), but it occurred more frequently in the data than *watakushi* (0.67%), which is a 1SG pronoun widely represented in the literature because of its status as a pronoun in Standard Japanese.

Wai is less marked than *watakushi* in Momona’s speech for dialectal reasons, as well as register. Momona’s usage of *wai* correlates with more marked dialectal speech. Since Momona’s normal speech is casual Kansai Japanese, the Standard Japanese formal pronoun *watakushi* is much more salient. The following example in Table 9 shows *wai* with Kansai Japanese features in bold.

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Kore</i>	this	‘this’ ((rice ball))
<i>karain ya</i>	spicy FP.KANSAI	‘is spicy.’
<i>Wai karai no tabe-re-hen</i> <i>no ya.</i>	1SG spicy GEN eat- POT-NEG. KANSAI NMLZ FP.KANSAI	‘I can’t eat spicy things.’

Table 9: Example of *wai* with Kansai Japanese features from
Kankoku no konbini no onigiri tte?
‘What are the rice balls in Korean convenience stores?’

In general, *wai* was relatively rare in the data, although half the utterances in which it occurred were related to dialogue about Momona’s high school days, which may be an important factor. The following example shows use of *wai* when Momona is talking

¹Aomori, Tokyo, Aichi, Mie, Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Nara, Wakayama, Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime, Kochi, Kagoshima, Hyogo, and Nara Prefectures are included.

about a brand of eye drops she used in high school. Kansai Japanese features are also frequent in this example and are bolded in Table 11.

Japanese	Gloss	English
Wai <i>ano naa</i>	1SG um y’know	‘I um y’know’
<i>ima naa</i>	now y’know	‘now y’know’
<i>kocchi tsukattotta</i> yan <i>ka.</i>	here use- PROG.KANSAI -PST FP. KANSAI Q	‘use this right.’
<i>Kocchi tsukattotte</i>	here use- PROG.KANSAI - CONN	‘I use these (eye drops)’
<i>cho-</i>	kinda-	‘but-’
<i>Uwaki shitottan</i> yakedo.	affair do- PROG.KANSAI -PST NMLZ but.KANSAI	‘I cheated on it (with different eye drops)’
<i>Megusuri mottoran</i> <i>kat-tara</i>	eye.drops have- PROG.KANSAI -NEG. KANSAI PST-if	‘If I didn’t have eye drops on me,’
<i>mawari no ko ni</i> na	surrounding GEN kids DAT FP. KANSAI	‘to the girls around me’
<i>Chotto megusuri motte</i> hen	a.little eye.drops have- CONT-NEG. KANSAI	‘Do you have any eye drops?’
<i>tte ittara</i>	QUOT say.if	‘if you asked that’
<i>zettai kore</i> yatta <i>mon</i>	definitely this COP.KANSAI .PST FP	‘it would always be this’
<i>Wakaru?</i>	understand	‘Do you understand?’
<i>Kore aruaru.</i>	this average	‘This was the norm.’
Wai <i>no koukou aruaru</i> yattan <i>kana.</i>	1SG GEN high.school aver- age COP.KANSAI .PST-NMLZ I.wonder	‘I guess it was the norm at my high school.’

Table 10: Example of *wai* in dialogue about high school from
Don Kihote de sugoi mon koutekitayo. Sugoi mon tte nani
‘Bought something amazing at Don Quihote. What is something amazing’

Momona’s use of *wai* is consistent with claims that it is a slang pronoun used in Kansai Japanese. *Wai* is also used by one of Momona’s peers in a video where Momona and her high school friends visit Hirakata Park, an amusement park in Osaka nicknamed “*Hirapaa*.” *Wai* also appears in the title of that video:

これがわいの本当の素。ひらパー姉さんになる。(仮)

Kore ga wai no hontou no moto. Hirapaa oneesan ni naru. (kari)

this NOM 1SG GEN real GEN origin. Hirapaa sister DAT become. (temporary)

‘This is my true origin. Become Hirapaa sister. (Temporary)’

The correlation between use of *wai* and high school slang suggests that *wai* indexes youthfulness. In *Kankoku no 31 ga majieberesuto-kyū (motta)* ‘31 in Korea is serious Everest grade (served)’, Momona uses *wai* immediately after *watashi*, as if to add contrastive impact to what she is saying. She has bought a gigantic tub of ice cream from Baskin Robbins 31 (the largest size possible: 1,237g), and she uses 1SG pronouns to emphasize the fact that such an enormous serving is usually shared, but she can eat it all by herself.

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Kore kau toki na</i>	this buy time FP.KANSAI	‘When I bought this’
<i>Menomae de</i>	in.front.of.me at	‘right in front of me’
<i>kappuru ga narande</i>	couple NOM lining.up	‘was a couple in line’
watashi no koto wo mi-yo- tta-n yakedo n.	1SG GEN NMLZ ACC look.KANSAI-PST-NMLZ but.KANSAI FP.KANSAI	‘watching me but’
Wai wa hitori de kore taberu kedo na.	1SG TOP alone by this eat but FP.KANSAI	‘I’ll eat this all by myself.’ (takes large bite of ice cream)

Table 11: Example from *Kankoku no 31 ga majieberesuto-kyū (motta)*
‘31 in Korea is serious Everest grade (served)’

Wai also appears in text in her videos, as in Figure 12: *Kore de wai mo vivi moderu (uso desu, gomen-nasai)* ‘With this I too am a Vivi model (that’s a lie, I’m sorry).’

Momona also uses *wai* on Twitter, in a tweet that reads: **Wai** ga kankoku de ichiban sukina ko. Zutto daisuki kawai-sugiru. Tadatada miryokuteki soruri-tan ‘My favorite girl in Korea. Always love her, too cute. Just charming Soruri.’ In all, Momona’s use of *wai* provides strong support for its dialectal, slang use in Kansai Japanese.

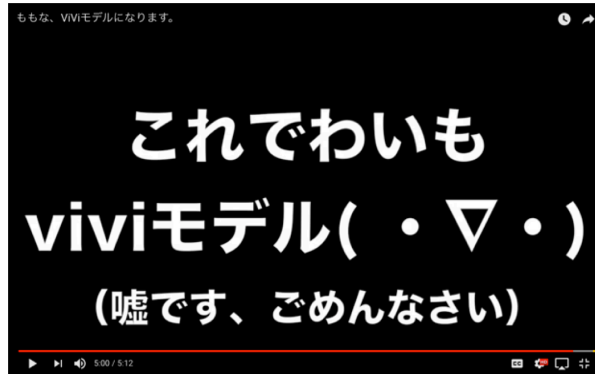


Figure 12: *Kore de wai mo vivi moderu (uso desu, gomen-nasai)*
 ‘With this I too am a Vivi model (that’s a lie, I’m sorry).’



Figure 13: *Wai ga kankoku de ichiban sukina ko. Zutto daisuki kawai-sugiru. Tadatada miryokuteki soruri-tan*
 ‘My favorite girl in Korea. Always love her, too cute. Just charming Soruri.’

D. *Watashi*, *Atashi*, *Watakushi*

Unlike traditional accounts of *watashi* that are said to index politeness, nearly half (43%) of Momona’s uses of *watashi* appear to correlate with announcements of immediate action or summaries of actions. For example, Table 12 shows an example from *Momona, ViVi moderu ni narimasu* ‘Momona becomes a ViVi mode,’ in which Momona explains a new website where one can purchase entire outfits worn by different models from the magazine ViVi. Momona usually purchases outfits worn by a model named Ema, but to make the video more interesting she announces her intention to choose something different.

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Saigo ni,</i>	lastly	‘Finally,’
<i>Watashi</i> <i>no,</i>	1SG GEN	‘my’
<i>daisuki na mentaiko no;</i>	like ADJ salmon roe GEN	‘beloved salmon roe’
<i>onigiri wo taberu de.</i>	rice.ball ACC eat FP.KANSAI	‘rice ball I’m gonna eat.’

Table 12: Example from *Momona, ViVi moderu ni narimasu*
‘Momona becomes a ViVi model’

Momona also uses the formality of *watashi* for comedic effect, such as in the example in Figure 14 from the video *Kareshi to dēto kurisumasu meiku de kawaiku natta yo* ‘date with a boyfriend I became cute with Christmas makeup,’ where instead of makeup she draws all over her face with face paint. She states towards the end, *Watashi wa paretto* ‘I am a palette,’ and complements her statement with the following on-screen text: *Watashi wa paretto (imishin)* ‘I am a palette (profound).’ This contrasts with her earlier statements in Table 13 from the same video where she says makeup and her face are also like palettes.

The examples of *watashi* discussed thus far do not occur with polite features, but this is not to say that these do not occur. For example, in the video [*Gekihaku*] *RIZAP ūman*



Figure 14: *Watashi wa paretto (imishin)*
‘I am a palette (profound).’

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Meiku wa</i> (0.2)	makeup TOP	‘Makeup is’
<i>paretto.</i>	palette	‘palette.’
(H) <i>Washi no kao wo</i> <i>paretto ya o omotte ne,</i> (1.5)	1SG GEN face ACC palette COP.KANSAI COMP think- CONN FP	‘Think of my face as a palette.’
<i>E wo egaku you ni shite</i>	picture ACC paint as.if DAT do.CONN	‘s if to paint a picture’
<i>kaite ikimasu ne.</i>	paint go FP	‘will paint.’

Table 13: Example of *washi* from
Kareshi to dēto kurisumasu meiku de kawaiku natta yo
‘Date with a boyfriend I became cute with Christmas makeup,’

no yaseru himitsu o abaku ‘[Revelation] RIZAP woman weight loss secrets revealed,’ Momona is joined by a male gym trainer who uses polite speech with her, reflective of the asymmetrical power relationship between himself and Momona (the customer, who has higher status in social interactions). It is difficult to tell whether Momona’s pronoun usage is significantly affected by her relationship to other video participants, since the data do not include any videos with people of higher social status than Momona. However, Momona does use *watashi* relatively more frequently in this video (*washi*, 4; *watashi*, 4). Momona uses polite speech with *watashi* in this video, which may be a more

traditional use of *watashi* to index politeness. Polite features are bolded in the text in Table 14.

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>Minna daisuki</i>	everyone love	‘Everyone’s beloved’
<i>ikemen torēnā san ga,</i>	handsome trainer mr. NOM ‘Mr. handsome trainer will’	
<i>watashi</i> <i>to isshoni,</i>	1SG with together	‘with me’
<i>toreeningu wo,</i>	training ACC	‘training’
<i>shite itadakeru to iu koto</i> <i>de,</i>	do receive.HUMBLE that.is.to.say	‘do, so without further ado,’
<i>oyobi</i> <i>shitai to omoimasu.</i>	invite.HONORIFIC do.VOL COMP think.POL	‘I think I’d like to invite him.’

Table 14: Example of *watashi* with polite features from
[Gekihaku] RIZAP *ūman no yaseru himitsu o abaku*
‘[Revelation] RIZAP woman weight loss secrets revealed,’

Overall, Momona’s use of *watashi* has been shown to occur in announcements with casual speech to convey a statement with more formality or seriousness, as well as in a more traditional usage indexing politeness towards another person. In either usage, *watashi* appears to be more marked than dialectal pronouns such as *washi* for Momona.

Atashi is traditionally considered an exclusively feminine pronoun, and 85% of the 20 tokens were used in utterances relating to appearance (hair, makeup, clothes, face, body) or things Momona likes. Many of her video content covers feminine topics such as makeup and clothing, and although Momona’s language and behavior reject commonly considered as “typical” feminine practices, she still constructs a femininity. Momona’s personality in her YouTube videos can be characterized as cute but goofy, not conforming to conventional ideals of a “lady,” but feminine nonetheless. The image in Section D. of Momona’s Christmas face paint instead of makeup is a great example of this (see Figure 14). Momona herself sometimes mentions in her videos that she has no *joshi ryoku* ‘femininity’ (lit. ‘woman power’). This is an explicit rejection of “traditional” femininity,

although her gender performance is still a display of femininity. It is entirely possible that Momona uses *atashi* ironically to distance herself from hyper-femininity, although the frequency distribution in Figure 2 shows that in the first 3 months of creating her YouTube channel, she primarily used *atashi*, suggesting that she may have used it to index femininity. She later makes a switch to using *washi* most neutrally, which may give her later uses of *atashi* another function relative to *washi*. Her attitude in her videos also supports that Momona uses *atashi* to distance herself from hyper-femininity, since she often comments on unattractive aspects of her own appearance such as pimples on her face, lipstick on her teeth, or the uncouth way she drinks Coke. The data overall show that *atashi* appears to have some correlation with femininity, though perhaps not in the traditional sense, and there does not appear to be any other strong indexicality of politeness or dialect.

Momona's least frequently used pronoun was *watakushi*, which follows given that *watakushi* is reserved for formal situations, which are rare in Momona's casual, friendly YouTube channel. Momona's use of *watakushi* matches with the common interpretation of this pronoun as indexing formality, and since Momona primarily speaks Kansai Japanese, her use of the formal Standard Japanese 1SG pronoun is very marked. The use of *watakushi* in general is very formal and typically reserved for formal situations such as press conferences or hearings. Traditional use of *watakushi* also involves very polite or respectful language, which takes into account the speaker's social distance from the addressee in a formal context. However, Momona's use of *watakushi* is related to the formality and weight of her message, rather than her relationship to the audience or a desire to convey politeness. *Watakushi* occurred only once in the data, when Momona made a very special announcement about a new peach flavored Coke drink. Momona loves Coke, and her name sounds like the Japanese word for peach, *momo*. Since *watakushi* marks high formality and high importance for Momona, its rarity can partially be explained by a general lack of formal situations in Momona's YouTube channel. Furthermore, unlike

washi, *washa*, and *wai*, there were no instances of *watakushi* in any YouTube video text or Twitter posts by Momona at the time of this study.

The use of *watakushi* in an “important” announcement is also parodic, since despite the title of the video, [*tsui ni*] *hatsu korabo douga desu* ‘[Finally] The first collaboration video,’ the collaboration turns out to be fake (she didn’t actually collaborate with Coca-Cola; Coca-Cola just happened to release a new peach flavor). Momona also combines the delivery of the announcement with several pauses for effect:

Japanese	Gloss	English
<i>nanto</i>	what	‘finally’
<i>...watakushi</i>	1SG	‘I’
<i>...konkai</i>	this.time	now’
<i>...mou,</i>	well	‘well’
<i>Daisuki na kata to korabo</i> <i>suru koto ga dekimashita.</i>	love ADJ person.POL with collaborate NMLZ NOM able.to.do-PST.POL	‘am able to collaborate with my favorite person.’

Table 15: Example of *watakushi* from
[*tsui ni*] *hatsu korabo douga desu*
‘[Finally] The first collaboration video,’

Given the weight attributed to the announcement by both her delivery and choice of pronoun, it is clear that the function of *watakushi* in Momona’s discourse is indexing importance and ironic import, rather than politeness.

VI. Future Studies

Future research should also examine other Kansai Japanese speakers besides Momona and their dialectal use of 1SG pronouns *washi*, *washa*, and *wai*. Such research is necessary to demonstrate that Momona is not an exception to conventional linguistic norms, and to highlight the innovative pronoun usage that exists within non-standard varieties of Japanese. In recent years, there has been a rise in popularity of dialect use in Japan, and many young speakers reportedly use a mix of dialect and Standard Japanese (Jinnouchi 2007). Research into the use of *washi* could help reveal if it is a recent phenomenon indicative of speakers reclaiming *washi* as a Kansai Japanese pronoun, unrecognized persistence of *washi* in Kansai speakers despite strong linguistic stereotypes associated with *washi* and elderly male language, or perhaps a casual pronoun with no regional indexicality. Further research could also investigate if speech rate and speech rhythm interact with Momona’s use of *washi* and *washa*.

Future research should also include a survey study investigating different age groups (adults vs. high school students) and regions (Kansai vs. Kanto) to investigate speakers’ knowledge of linguistic stereotypes and subconscious shared speaker information about usage patterns in language. According to Okamoto (1995), Jordan (1990) describes the phenomenon of neutralization, where “some patterns continually described as *onna-rashii* (‘ladylike’) now turn up frequently in examples of men’s speech” (p.2-3) (parenthetical translation is mine). This is reflective of a shift in speaker judgments and indexical meanings, and modern-day investigation of traditionally clear, categorical pronouns would serve to investigate the shift in cultural stereotypes of women’s speech and men’s speech.

This study also has implications for future research on regional dialects, Japanese linguistics, and nontraditional language use. Researchers now view online platforms and discourse as rich sources of linguistic data, and YouTube is no exception. YouTube should be considered a great linguistic resource for study, especially for a topic such as

use of nontraditional pronouns such as *washi* and *wai* that are unlikely to occur with much frequency in recorded interviews or older corpus data. YouTube as a platform has wide access to discourse and narratives recorded in casual registers, which captures language use otherwise difficult to record in interviews or other recording situations. In this particular case study of one YouTube vlogger, I was able to analyze 33 videos and approximately 3 hours of data, a substantial amount of data given its low frequency compared to other pronouns in Japanese.

VII. Conclusion

The fact that 51% of Momona’s 1SG pronouns usage is made up of forms not discussed in the literature shows that this study fills a large gap regarding non-standard pronouns and non-normative pronoun usage in Japanese. I have argued that Momona uses the 1SG pronouns *washi*, *washa*, and *wai* to construct her identity as a young, goofy, Kansai jin ‘Kansai person’ in her YouTube videos. Furthermore, an indexical field for *washi* that includes qualities such as “Kansai” and “casual” accounts for Momona’s use of *washi*, despite the existence of the Elderly Male Language stereotype. Not only do Momona’s pronouns express alignment with the Kansai cultural identity, but there are also perhaps other advantages for YouTube in entertainment value, since Kansai Japanese is strongly associated with comedians and humor in the media (Jinnouchi 2007). Data from Momona’s videos and Twitter account give evidence suggesting that *washa*, a previously undocumented in the literature, may be a new pronoun grammaticalized from *washi wa*. The data also provide actual speech data for *wai*. Momona’s use of *atashi* is used somewhat ironically to highlight Momona’s unfeminine qualities to construct her own version of femininity, rather than aligning her with traditional cultural ideals of femininity or being *onna-rashii* ‘ladylike.’ Instead of indexing politeness, *watashi* tended to be used for announcements of intention or action, and *watakushi* was reserved for high formality and importance. In sum, this study of Momona’s 1SG pronoun usage challenges traditional accounts of easily categorized pronouns and contributes new data to the body of literature on nontraditional use of 1SG pronouns, as well as their use in non-standard varieties of Japanese.

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